Security Council

Fifty-fifth year

Provisional

4208th meeting

Wednesday, 25 October 2000, 10.30 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Andjaba	(Namibia)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Listre
	Bangladesh	Mr. Chowdhury
	Canada	Mr. Heinbecker
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Malaysia	Mr. Hasmy
	Mali	Mr. Kassé
	Netherlands	Mr. Hamer
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Tunisia	Mr. Ben Mustapha
	Ukraine	Mr. Krokhmal
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Grainger
	United States of America	Ms. Soderberg

Agenda

Women and peace and security.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

00-70857 (E)

The meeting was resumed at 10.45 a.m., 25 October 2000.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Ethiopia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hussein (Ethiopia): I would like to thank you, Sir, for presiding over this very important open debate of the Security Council on the question of women and peace and security. It is true that issues concerning women are dealt with in different forums, especially in the fields of development and human rights. We believe that this open debate of the Security Council — the result of an initiative under your presidency — will also enable us to exchange views on the situation of women in armed conflict, an issue that is within the mandate of the Security Council.

I fully endorse the thrust of Mr. Kofi Annan's opening statement yesterday. I also take this opportunity to welcome the statements of Ms. Angela King and Ms. Noeleen Heyzer for reminding us how far we have yet to go in addressing the perils faced by women during war and also during so-called periods of peace, when many crimes are often committed, too. It is not just periods of conflict that we must consider.

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and other United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), must be commended for their direct support for women in conflict situations and for their work in bringing women's voices to national, regional and international decision-making arenas. In particular, UNIFEM's role in facilitating the All-Party Conference in Arusha and in putting forward Burundian women's recommendations for the final peace agreement, highlights their innovative and unique approach.

More specifically, Ethiopia believes that a full-scale assessment of the impact of armed conflict on women and of women's role in peace-building is long overdue. We hope the Council will recommend such a follow-up to today's debate. We have full confidence in UNIFEM's ability to support this process, drawing on other United Nations funds and programmes and the important work of civil society.

We are not short on knowledge of where we are deficient in fully meeting the rights of women in all their aspects. Therefore, I will not repeat what others eloquently stated yesterday better than I could. Most States, including mine, have legislated for equality between men and women. Yet, if we look at the very parliaments and legislatures that did that, we will see that equality between men and women is lacking.

Recently, we held the second multi-party elections in my country. Twenty million people voted, of which half were women. Yet, only 10 per cent of the 540 members of parliament elected were women, despite the fact that in some electoral districts 80 per cent of the voters were women. In the previous parliament, women constituted only one per cent of its membership. In the executive branch, the situation is relatively better, but much has yet to be done. This will require continuous but determined efforts by both women themselves and men who genuinely believe in equality between men and women.

Equality will not drop from the sky — one must strive to achieve it. Over the years, and especially under Mr. Kofi Annan, the United Nations has made considerable progress in this area. In a few agencies, the number of women in senior positions surpassed 30 per cent some years ago. In two or more, 50 per cent has been achieved. Hence, while more can and should be done, it is time that we, the Member States, including mine, follow the example set by our world Organization. Perhaps the best place for the Member States to start is in this chamber. Perhaps we can let the countries of the Permanent Five set the example by sending women as their representatives. Some may say there might be too many of them, but we have had too many men for over five decades. So it will not hurt if we start with the next lot of Permanent Representatives. The rest of us should not be far behind. For my part, I will strive for my successor to be a woman Permanent Representative as soon as possible.

I say this because, if we do not have women represented in sufficient and equitable number at all levels — all levels — of society, then no amount of wisdom-filled statements in the General Assembly chamber or elsewhere will bring peace and security to women in particular and humankind in general. For our part, we in Ethiopia are committed to pursuing diligently the small gains we have made and will build on them. Globally, too, we can all do it.

In the spirit of the Millennium Summit, let us talk less and act more, since we say we know what needs to be done. In this context, I share completely what Ambassador Penny Wensley of Australia said in her concluding remarks late yesterday afternoon.

The President: I thank the representative of Ethiopia for his kind words addressed to my delegation.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Malawi, whom I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Juwayeyi (Malawi): Those of us who are not in the Security Council do not get an opportunity to congratulate a delegation for assuming the presidency of the Council, so it gives me particular pleasure this morning to congratulate you, Mr. President, and I am most grateful that during your presidency you have taken the initiative to hold this open session on women and peace and security.

My Government attaches great importance to the protection and security of women and girls, both in situations of armed conflict and in peace. Wars and armed conflict bring untold suffering and misery to communities and nations, for they entail devastating and horrific levels of violence and brutality, employing any possible means. Today's wars and conflicts make little distinction between soldiers and civilians and between adults and children. Currently, most of the wars and conflicts take place in developing countries, where most of the population lives in rural areas. Often, these conflicts are within countries, rather than across borders. Women and children constitute a disproportionate number of the affected populations and, therefore, suffer the brunt of violence and brutality.

Armed conflict affects women and girls differently from men and boys. During armed conflict, not only are women and girls killed, maimed, abducted, separated from their loved ones, subjected to starvation, malnutrition and forced displacement, but they are also continually threatened with rape, domestic violence, sexual exploitation and slavery, trafficking, sexual humiliation and mutilation. Rape and sexual violence perpetrated by the armed forces, whether governmental or other actors, including in some instances peacekeeping personnel, increases the potential for spreading HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. No wonder most of the HIV/AIDS victims in the developing countries are women and girls. HIV/AIDS leaves millions of children orphaned and, in most cases, the responsibility to care for them rests largely on the shoulders of older people.

All of these harmful and widespread threats to women and girls have long-term consequences for durable peace, security and development. The sad thing is that in most instances the women do not know why the wars and armed conflicts erupt, owing to the fact that they are either under-represented or not represented at all at the decision-making levels.

My Government applauds and thanks the Secretary-General, the United Nations bodies and agencies, non-governmental organizations, international agencies and donor countries for the efforts they have made to protect and secure peace and security for women and girls. Various international legal instruments, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the corresponding Optional Protocols, have been adopted by the General Assembly. International Criminal Tribunals have been established for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda, and these have made great strides to help end impunity for crimes against women and girls. Forms of sexual violence are now included as a war crime in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Beyond its emergency relief responsibilities, the United Nations has increasingly become involved in efforts aimed at peacekeeping, peace-making and peace-building. It is gratifying to note that the Security Council, even though it has taken five decades to do so, has now recognized the importance of women's role and of their increased participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building.

However, there is still a lot more that needs to be done. Appropriate solutions cannot be achieved if women are left out of the decision-making machinery. You are aware, Mr. President, that women continue to be under-represented in all peacekeeping, peace-making and peace-building efforts, including in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the United Nations. This should not be allowed to continue.

In the long term however, the only way to truly ensure the protection and security of women and girls is to prevent wars and armed conflicts from taking

place. Major root causes of most of the recent wars and armed conflicts have included poverty and lack of respect for human rights. These ills must be addressed first. My delegation recalls that, at the end of the Millennium Summit, world leaders pledged to eradicate poverty and make the right to development a reality for everyone. This means promoting equality between men and women in decision-making. This further means the involvement and full participation of women in all issues, including peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace-building, as well as at the negotiating table, from the grassroots level to the decision-making levels.

My delegation requests the Secretary-General and the Security Council to urge Member States to ensure that training in human rights and peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace-building includes everyone — civilians, soldiers, the police, civil society, the women themselves and peacekeeping personnel. Those who commit crimes against women, including the peacekeeping personnel, should be brought to book.

Let us heed the women's cry for an equal opportunity to voice their ideas in official peace negotiations. And let us act now.

The President: I thank the representative of Malawi for his kind words addressed to my delegation.

The next speaker is the representative of Guatemala. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Sir, for having convened this meeting, and I would like to thank the Secretary-General, Angela King and Noeleen Heyzer for the lucid statements they made yesterday.

Guatemala could not help but participate in a debate on women and peace and security. In fact, an important leader of my country's non-governmental-organization community, Ms. Luz Méndez, participated in the closed session the day before yesterday at which the Security Council listened to diverse representatives of non-governmental organizations who spoke on this subject.

Indeed, as everyone here knows, in December 1996, under the aegis of the United Nations and a group of friendly countries, the two parties that had been battling one another during four decades of fratricidal conflict put an end to this conflict by signing a set of peace agreements. These accords endeavour to address the major problems that were at the root of the conflict. These problems include poverty, marginalization, discrimination and a lack of participation. The issue of the status of women and their participation in the economic and social development of the country appears throughout these agreements as both a goal and a commitment.

By way of introduction, the tremendous restrictions under which Guatemalan women have lived since time immemorial could be mentioned. The majority of the population lives in poverty. Women, and especially those who are heads of households, are among the most vulnerable members of the population. Such women — and especially indigenous women living in rural areas — have the highest levels of illiteracy. Women have had to face particular obstacles, including marginalization, a lack of opportunities, discrimination and violence. This situation was aggravated by the consequences of the internal armed conflict, which brought with it death, disappearances, uprooting and all types of hardships. Many families were forced to leave their places of residence to seek refuge in neighbouring countries or in regions of the country far removed from the combat zones. The number of widows and women heads of household increased enormously.

For all of these reasons, when peace was agreed upon, many Guatemalan women found themselves in a situation of grave economic hardship and social vulnerability. A broad and negotiated process of reconciliation, resettlement and cooperation was necessary, as was the healing of the deep physical and psychological wounds of the war.

During the almost five years that have passed since the signing of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace progress has been made. This includes the return and resettlement of displaced people, the downsizing of the army, progress in the reform of the judicial and educational systems and the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate access to land. Furthermore, specific measures were adopted to study and analyse the situation of women and to design strategies to improve it. This has been the role of the women's forum and has led to the establishment of the office of the advocate for indigenous women. In more general terms, Guatemala today is a more open, more plural and more participatory society than it was five years ago. At the same time, there is much greater

public awareness than before about the need to deal with injustice and inequity and to achieve deep structural reforms, in both the economic and social spheres, which are indispensable to bring about sustainable peace.

In real terms, in recent years the participation of women has grown in many fields. An increase in the number of women involved in training programmes and in community affairs can be seen. Women have greater access to leadership positions and are taking greater part in the electoral processes, as well as in political and entrepreneurial activities, and not a few now hold prominent positions in the country.

At the same time, a great deal remains to be done. As Ms. Méndez pointed out the day before yesterday, many of the commitments contained in the peace agreements have not been fulfilled in the quick and timely manner originally envisioned. It is obvious that we are still far from achieving the goal contained in the agreements — that is, to promote and effectively facilitate the involvement of women in all areas of life, at all levels, without discrimination of any kind. Perhaps the complexity of what would follow was not adequately foreseen, especially because the original timetable of four years proved to be insufficient to deal with the accumulation of the difficulties that we faced. For this reason the oversight commission of the peace process recently rescheduled compliance with the commitments. Also for this reason, we hope that the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala will be extended to the end of 2003.

In conclusion, Guatemala has important experiences to contribute to this discussion. I endorse vigorously the recommendations that Ms. Méndez presented the day before yesterday on the lessons that have been learned from these experiences — lessons that can be useful for other Member States of this Organization.

The President: I thank the representative of Guatemala for his kind words addressed to my delegation.

The next speaker is the representative of the United Arab Emirates. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to express our gratitude to you, Sir, for your efforts to strengthen the role of women in the sphere of international peace and security. We support the statements made by Ms. King and Ms. Heyzer, which reflect the international community's concerns about the advancement of women in the area of peace, security and sustainable development.

In recent decades, women in many States throughout the world, the United Nations, its specialized agencies and regional and international organizations have been assigned important posts. They have played a leading role equal to that of men in reconstruction and in economic, social, cultural and human development. They have demonstrated sufficient scientific and technical knowledge and competence to allow them to adapt to events and developments in their societies and the world at large.

However, despite all the regional and international conferences that have been held on the topic of women in the past two decades, which have addressed all the problems and attempted to meet all the challenges that have been encountered in seeking to enhance women's participation at the national, regional and international levels, the role of women in the maintenance of international peace and security still falls short of our aspirations for contemporary international relations. These various developments have highlighted the gravity of the situation of women, who suffer from racial discrimination, ethnic cleansing, rape, forced displacement and other phenomena, particularly in countries where war, internal conflict and occupation continue to rage. Furthermore, the imbalances in economic and social relations between the developed and the developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, have their own negative impact. These phenomena have aggravated illiteracy and poverty, which in turn have increased the suffering of women and children.

If this situation persists, particularly in regions of Africa, Asia and the Middle East that still labour under the yoke of occupation and war, it will present enormous challenges to the international community. This requires the Security Council to follow up the implementation of its resolutions on these various conflicts. The Council must coordinate its work with international, national and regional organizations and agencies in order to find peaceful solutions to these conflicts as soon as possible. Without such a commitment, the people of those States — especially women and children — will continue to suffer the

effects of instability and insecurity, which in turn fuel violence, extremism and frustration.

The United Arab Emirates has closely followed the situation in the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories, which has experienced a serious exacerbation of violence and aggression, including the Israeli blockade against the Palestinian people, in which women and children suffer the most. My country deplores this situation and calls on Israel to end its massive violations of human rights in the Palestinian territories. For the fourth week running, the international press has been broadcasting images and reports highlighting these criminal abuses and violations. I refer in particular to the Palestinian mother who was killed in the presence of her nine children. Another woman, old and infirm, who was merely trying to get to her workplace, was also gunned down. Furthermore, an unprecedented number of Palestinians have died or been wounded.

These examples speak volumes about the serious human rights violations being committed by the Israeli forces, particularly against women and children. The persistence of this situation demonstrates that certain States of the international community use double standards in their approach to these events. The international community has rejected such behaviour through resolutions recently adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly. Israel's actions run counter to the letter and spirit of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, to international humanitarian law and norms, and to the primacy of respect for international law.

We therefore demand that an independent, neutral commission of inquiry be established and that an international criminal tribunal be set up, on the model of those already created by the Security Council, to prosecute and try the perpetrators of the crimes committed against the Palestinian people, in particular Palestinian women and children. This international mechanism of deterrence could help to limit the growing violence and the serious violations of the fundamental human rights of women and children.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates believes that the acts of violence and massive violations of the human rights of powerless innocent civilians, particularly women and children, are creating abnormal conditions of bloodshed, oppression, inequality and racial and religious discrimination. We therefore stress the importance of disseminating a culture of peace, respect for the basic international norms and standards for the treatment of women, and the legitimate rights guaranteed by religions and national and international laws and norms.

We also believe in the vanguard role that women can play in international affairs, especially in the area of economic, social and human development. The participation of women should be guaranteed in international decision-making and in peacekeeping operations in order to ensure security, stability and sustainable development at the regional, national and international levels.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Arab Emirates for his kind words addressed to my delegation.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Norway. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hønningstad (Norway): Let me start by expressing my thanks to the Namibian presidency for the initiative to hold this open meeting on women and peace and security. Norway appreciates that these topics are being discussed in the Security Council. We are also grateful for the excellent introductions that we heard yesterday and for the many thoughtful and in-depth interventions that we have had on this very import topic. In view of that, I take the liberty of shortening by a little my intervention, the text of which has been distributed.

A sustainable political process and the enhancement of democracy require full participation of women. Peace and the avoidance of armed conflict are inextricably linked to equality between women and men and to development.

Women do not yet have the opportunity to participate on an equal basis with men in all areas and at all levels of public life, especially in decision-making and policy-making. This is true also with regard to peace-building, peacemaking and conflict resolution activities. At the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, in June this year, "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", the topic of women and peace and security was among the areas in which it was agreed that a strengthening of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was

needed. In this respect, I take the liberty of referring to Ambassador Wensley of Australia's excellent intervention yesterday on the problem of gender balance and equality in the United Nations system. Definitely much can be done there, and she had some bright ideas in that respect.

There is now wider recognition that armed conflict has different destructive impacts on women and men and that a gender-sensitive approach to the application of international human rights law and international humanitarian law is important. Women's contributions in the areas of peace-building, peacemaking and conflict resolution have been increasingly recognized. Education and training in non-violent conflict resolution have been introduced. There is also greater recognition of the need to integrate a gender perspective in the planning, design and implementation of humanitarian assistance and to provide adequate resources to make this possible. Humanitarian relief agencies and civil society continue to play an increasingly important role in the provision of humanitarian assistance, including programmes to address the needs of women and girls.

I would like to take this opportunity to announce that Norway will host an expert seminar on the situation of women in refugee camps early next year.

In the Brahimi report (S/2000/809), the gender issues are in our view not sufficiently covered. There is a need for a clearer focus on the role of women as a resource in the planning and implementation of peace processes. Also, the report does not say enough about the potential positive role of women and the impact of conflict on women and girls. It is therefore of utmost importance that the gender perspective should be strengthened in the follow-up to the report. We have for too long seen women as victims only. Women represent a resource that we cannot afford to ignore. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Brahimi report seems to be a step in the right direction in this respect.

In June this year, a Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations was adopted in Windhoek, Namibia. We view this plan as a good start for putting commitments already made by the United Nations into practice. Ms. Graça Machel's review document dealing with the impact of armed conflict on children and women is also seen as an important contribution.

Norway has commissioned a study on women soldiers in post-conflict situations. We know that a number of women participate actively in armed conflict, both as combatants and support staff. We need to know more about their role after the conflict, the problems they encounter and how their competence can be used in a constructive manner in a post-conflict situation.

In conclusion, Norway will continue to be committed to the issue of women and peace and security. We must strive for full implementation of gender mainstreaming in all activities. Political will is the key, and it is our responsibility to see that we achieve these goals.

The President: I thank the representative of Norway for his kind words addressed to my delegation.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Rwanda. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mutaboba (Rwanda): My delegation joins others in congratulating you, Mr. President, on calling this debate on women and peace and security. We also appreciate statements made earlier by Ms. Angela King and Ms. Noeleen Heyzer. On this subject we are happy to share the thoughts of the President of the Republic of Rwanda, Mr. Paul Kagame, and all the members of the Cabinet, especially the Minister for Gender and Women in Development, who all strongly speak out in favour of empowering women for durable peace and sustainable development. Peace is a prerequisite for sustainable development, and women have a lot to offer.

In most African traditional societies and modern societies throughout the world, solidarity with one another has been the best chance for peace and security. Such solidarity is gradually shaped and built from the early days of our lives, and we owe this acquisition to mothers — and fathers of course — whoever we may be and wherever we may be from. The focal point for all family life is the wife, the mother, the "she citizen" of the world. Unfortunately, what she offers and gives is not always what she gets in return when wars and calamities break out. The time is right for her to have a say in this at all levels and in all institutions.

All hardships and abuses befall her, but she never gives up. Stories from Rwanda teach us all that when political and ethnic tensions cause conflict, women have come as one to suggest building bridges rather than walls. The Security Council has done well, but it could do better; it can help women in knocking walls down and building bridges between people and cultures. In post-genocide Rwanda, women still carry the burden of responsibility and caring for their children, orphans, the elderly and husbands in prisons. Women have assumed the entire role of breadwinners and are shouldering multiple challenges despite the fact that 54 per cent are illiterate, and the majority of them live below the poverty line.

Those who made women widows in Rwanda, in Burundi and in the Balkans and those who raped them and left them with infections, diseases and consequences of all sorts, including unwanted pregnancies and HIV/AIDS, are still at large and active. They are killing and raping more women and girls across borders, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Burundi and elsewhere, under the silence of many who, contrariwise, should arrest them according to several Security Council resolutions and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide that we all signed. Instead, these criminals curiously still enjoy the world's attention, especially those in Arusha and in Rwanda's prisons or in big cities of the world. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, they cease to be what they are — meaning criminals, rapists and killers — the day they agree to join the ranks of the Kabila forces and his allies, who are creating more havoc when peace and security are at stake. And this body seems powerless to take timely and decisive action.

Adding insult to injury, the agony is still not over for those women who were victims of rape as a weapon of genocide. As witnesses at the International Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, they are indeed compelled to tell their stories in an all-male environment — the judges, the interpreters and everyone else are all men. More attention should be drawn to this situation and it should be swiftly addressed by the Council if peace and security are for all, including women victims of rape as a weapon of genocide. Let competent women — and there are many — be recruited and do the job. We cannot accept double standards even if we have to live with them.

My delegation reiterates that the presence of such criminals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to be a threat to the security of our people and to our sovereignty. Rwanda is in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to stop them from killing and raping more innocent women, girls and children. Rwanda is there to get them and many of those taken hostages back. It does so within the framework of the Lusaka Agreement framework, as negotiated and agreed by all parties, welcomed by the Council and, thus far, not changed by any United Nations resolution, as wrongly stated by the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In September alone — in one month — we were blessed to get back to Rwanda from the Democratic Republic of the Congo 17,000 of our people — women, children and men. And we will continue to get them back to where they belong, within the law. The international community should encourage and contribute to this effort as a genuine search for peace and security rather than keeping quiet and dwelling on non-priority issues. We take this opportunity to thank the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the assistance given to us and to the returnees who are being reintegrated into their societies, as over a million others have been since November 1996.

Against this picture of continued inaction by the international community, and this body in particular, as regards the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and the region — although I know efforts are being made — women have come together to form associations nationally and regionally and, with the assistance of our Government, have established women's councils and have elected representatives from villages to the national level for the first time ever in the history of Rwanda. Peace-building is high on the agenda of women in their various development activities. We encourage them to continue because they are right and because it is the right thing to do. Women have indeed understood that there is no possible development activity if there is no peace at home and across our borders. Peace and security are the prime responsibility of this body, and women have a right to be involved, especially where we men have failed. They have proved they can do it. Let us involve them and empower them.

Namibia has done a great job in promoting advocacy for women, and we once again congratulate Namibia and its leadership. Rwanda, on her part, has

hosted two international conferences on women and peace. The first one, the Pan-African Conference of Peace, Gender and Development, was organized in March 1997, and the Kigali Declaration was adopted under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The second one, which took place in June, was entitled Women as Partners for Peace. It was organized by the current Ambassador of the United States to Rwanda and his extended team, to whom we express our sincere thanks and congratulations. The conclusions and recommendations of all these conferences whether in Kampala, Dakar, Johannesburg, Kigali or Windhoek, should be translated into action to make sure that women get what they deserve and on time.

In a bid to promote peace and security, Rwandan women have undertaken various other important activities that are worth mentioning and from which we could learn. First, a programme called Action Campaign for Peace was launched by Pro-Femme Twese Hamwe, an umbrella organization that brings together Rwandan women's non-governmental organizations. Secondly, a peace village was built by the Rwandan Women's Alliance and Solidarity (AVOSERWA), which supports genocide widows; the village is dedicated to and named after the former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela. Thirdly, because of such peace initiatives the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization awarded Rwandan women a prize for peace and tolerance in 1997. Fourthly, in a bid to contribute in the area of resolving conflicts and promoting peace in the region, Rwanda hosted the international conference to which I referred earlier, under the auspices of the OAU and the Economic Commission for Africa.

This Rwandan experience and many others in the region and beyond speak to the Council and should be given attention. In the search for peace and security for all, one of the best strategies for conflict prevention is to extend the role of women as peacemakers from the village council in the hinterland of any given country Member of this Organization, to this very Chamber where peace and security are supposed to be ensured for all, without any distinction. The distance to be covered seems too long, but we are sure to reach the final objective if we empower women and take them on board.

As rightly expressed in Africa by President Kagame on 25 June 2000, when opening the conference entitled Women as Partners for Peace,

> "The twentieth century failed to acknowledge the role of women in conflict resolution and the search for peace. Yet everybody knows that when there is war, the heaviest toll falls on women and children. It is now time to bridge this gap because without the involvement of our mothers, sisters and daughters within and outside our borders, we cannot find lasting peace. For a long time, women have been relegated to the periphery of political activities. Governments have to put in place policy instruments and institutions which will enable women to play an important role in the area of peace, reconciliation and conflict resolution ... It is not only wars that undermine peace. Human rights abuses, social injustice, poverty and bad governance are some of the factors that should be examined in order to tackle conflict on several fronts."

In conclusion, the Rwanda Government's commitment to increase the participation of women in creating and promoting peace should guide the Council and its membership to adequately address the issue of peace and security by involving women. They have experiences to share and a clear, strong will to destroy all myths and prejudices around and against them. The Council needs to be gender-sensitive as many of us here have become, but also, and especially, needs to act to bring women to the negotiating table in order to help us to reach the lasting peace and security for which we long.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Botswana. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mmualefe (Botswana): My delegation is grateful to you, Mr. President, for your timely initiative, and to the Security Council not only for recognizing the various factors that relate to women and peace and security, but for emphasizing the importance of women's increased participation in all aspects of the process of conflict prevention and resolution. Among the several documents before us, Security Council document S/PRST/2000/25 particularly attests to this fact. Also, the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995,

contributed in no small measure to focusing the world's attention on the agenda of women, peace and security. We also thank the various United Nations bodies that continue to highlight the subject of women, peace and security. In particular, we extend our thanks to the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Ms. King, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, Ms. Heyzer, for their valuable interventions yesterday and the work they continue to do in this area.

Unfortunately, violence against women is still the norm in some parts of the world. There is definitely a need to strengthen or enact legislation to censure or punish domestic violence, including the sexual abuse of women and girls.

In cases of peace operations, violations against women must not be tolerated. They must be punished. Peace support operations must include well-staffed and integrated gender units and gender advisers. It should not be forgotten that gender inequality, discrimination and violence affect women more than men. Field operations should therefore pay particular attention to affected women, especially refugee women and girls.

In the case of Botswana, it is generally understood and slowly being accepted that violence against women, in particular domestic violence, is not a family matter but a serious crime. Laws are therefore expected to change to punish this crime. In 1997 there was a review of all Botswana laws that discriminate against women.

In war and conflict situations, the under-representation of women in decision-making at all levels is one of the major problems. In most cases, the very men who make war or who take part in war make decisions related to conflicts, and yet it is women who have to take care of the war victims, both emotionally and physically. For women to contribute effectively to the maintenance of peace and security, their economic and political empowerment is very crucial. This fact is well illustrated in the Windhoek Declaration, which was adopted during the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group in Namibia on 31 May 2000.

Botswana recognizes that the participation of women in decision-making at all levels of private and public life is an important human rights issue. In trying to strengthen the link between politics and human rights, Botswana has consistently expended efforts towards gender-neutral education, including political education, mobilization, lobbying and advocacy. Non-governmental organizations have played a contributory role here.

Whenever the issue of women, peace and security is discussed, the painful topic of children in armed conflict, children who are routinely subjected to gang rape, ethnic cleansing and genocide, cannot be overlooked. In this regard, we commend the 1996 Machel report, which clearly demonstrated that the full impact of armed conflict on children can be fully understood only when associated with or examined in the context of the effects it has on women, families and communities.

I cannot end my statement without touching on the area of women and health. In Botswana, there are some hurdles pertaining mainly to negative cultural customs and traditions that need to be relegated to the past. The Government, non-governmental organizations and civil society have continued to make efforts to address these problems. Currently, the main issue of great concern is the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which, as in most African countries, is devastating our country, targeting mostly women. The United Nations, United Nations bodies and the international community are called upon to aggressively address the HIV/AIDS problem in Africa and elsewhere, including in areas of armed conflict.

In conclusion, it is the responsibility of each and every one of us to increase public awareness of the positive role played by gender mainstreaming in peace and security matters.

The President: I thank the representative of Botswana for his kind words addressed to my delegation.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Nepal. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal): At the outset, I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on women and peace and security. This topical issue needs greater thrust in a conflict-ridden world.

We appreciate the opening statement of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, as well as the presentations by Assistant Secretary-General Angela King and the Executive Director of the United Nations

Development Fund for Women, Ms. Noeleen Heyzer, before the Council.

In our culture, women are the source of strength. An old verse in Sanskrit maintains that God takes his abode where women enjoy respect. Without casting any aspersions on fellow men, let me say that women make more compassionate and often more effective leaders. They go to the root of the problem when they have to address it.

Let me cite an example. A few years ago, in some remote parts of Nepal women stood up to rectify a social and economic malady. In those poverty-stricken areas, men would squander their meagre incomes on drinking. They would come home inebriated, touch off a row and beat up their wives and children in drunken stupor.

Tired of this, women pressed the Government to declare those areas dry zones. Once there was no liquor to drink, men shared chores more, household violence declined, families had better food as their incomes were properly used and children were spared gratuitous exposure to alcohol and violence. Controlling the booze was hard to sustain in a male-dominated world, but it worked.

Many studies have established that women tend to be more sincere, reliable and compassionate; they also tend to make prudent use of their resources. Nepal's microcredit programme reveals that women default on their loans less, their earnings are used to meet the family needs more and their repayment rate is higher than that of their male counterparts.

In conflict situations women become the victims of outrage and violence. They are harassed, abused, maimed, mutilated, raped, compelled to bear the stigma of outrage or even killed. They frequently witness horrendous abuse meted out to their children. They know the pain of losing their husbands and sons to war. They know first-hand where the shoe pinches. Men may even subconsciously wish for the excitement of adventure that conflicts present. Women are more likely to shun violence more consistently. For those reasons, and more, women are likely to be more committed to resolving disputes more peacefully than men are.

Women constitute more than 50 per cent of the global population. Conflicts make more women and children victims than men. Women have been able to do most of the things men have, from scaling Mount Everest to running a country. Still women are seldom at the forefront of resolving disputes, preventing conflicts and keeping peace. They are yet to attain equality and find their proper place in society. This has to change.

Change is something we have already agreed to make. The United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and a number of other conventions, including those on humanitarian law, have already drawn up the blueprint. All we need to do is to implement those provisions in real life to let women enjoy equality in all walks of life, and let them apply their ingenuity to solve the world's problems.

We see three distinct roles for women in the area of peace and security in the context of the United Nations. First, the United Nations must work to empower women around the world by encouraging equality and the implementation of human rights provisions already agreed upon. Secondly, more women must be sent out to the field as peacekeepers and peace-makers than has been the case so far. They can then have a better feel for realities on the ground and can bring that experience to formulating informed strategies for a durable peace. Thirdly, we must have more women in the United Nations system, especially at the policy level. They will bring their compassion and a fresh outlook to their work. They are likely to put conflicts in proper perspective, try to look into problems in their entirety, and fashion solutions in a holistic manner.

A word of caution is in order here, though. Women must work hard to bridge the gap and catch up. They should do more to acquire skills and a competitive edge. They ought to strive for their own empowerment. Generous pledges of equality will not bear fruit unless women take the initiative to excel and lead the change. A gender-based quota as a quick fix makes sense. But, at the end of the day, it is the quality that sustains the gains of women, not the quota.

As women are superior in caring, providing, loving and balancing in everyday life, let them also use their skills, warmth, caution and compassion to promote peace and security to this strife-stricken world. If they can bring peace in their homes and villages, they can do it in their countries and in the

world. Partnership between men and women is sure to bring tremendous synergy.

To conclude, we believe that women can make a difference if they have the opportunity to do so. Therefore, let the mothers and sisters of the world be authors of peace and security in the new century.

The President: I thank the representative of Nepal for his kind words addressed to my delegation.

I shall now make a statement as the representative of Namibia, and on behalf of my Minister, who, due to other equally important engagements, is not able to be with us this morning.

Let me begin by expressing my hearty congratulations to the Secretary-General on his personal participation in this debate and his important statement. We are proud of him and fully support his leadership in this and other worthy endeavours.

The Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Ms. Angela King, made a constructive contribution in this meeting, and I thank her for her outstanding work. The preparations for the meeting would not have been successful without the cooperation and advice of the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM). I thank Ms. Noeleen Heyzer, its Executive Director, for her dedication. The continuing efforts being made by UNIFEM to assist women's peace activities at the grassroots level are greatly appreciated by all. These two distinguished United Nations officials have brought to the table unique perspectives, factual accounts and practical proposals for action. My thanks also go to all the agencies for their contributions and support.

This open debate is the first of its kind convened by the Council. It is a good omen that it is taking place on United Nations Day in the year 2000. Fifty-five years ago today the Charter of the United Nations came into being. Yet it has taken the international community many decades to recognize that women are among the principal victims of war, conflict and insecurity. They must thus be treated as indispensable partners in the maintenance of international peace and security. Today's meeting therefore constitutes a new and significant beginning for the Security Council; the Council should conscientiously make use of the contributions women can make in dealing with the issues of preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention, protection of women and girls in armed conflict and peace-making, peacekeeping and support operations.

The video images we all saw at the beginning of this meeting tell the full story and its implications. No one can deny the fact that women shoulder the heavy burden of sustaining embattled societies, while attending to traumas, miseries and violence during armed conflicts. Regrettably, peace negotiations are habitually male-dominated, the result being under-utilization of the capabilities of women in conflict prevention, resolution and settlement and a wilful disregard of their concerns.

Armed conflict affects women in special ways. Women demonstrate this time and again, but apparently to no avail. They are among the first civilians to become refugees or internally displaced persons. Nonetheless, they are the ones who are expected to look after children left in a state of despair and suffering. Women assume the responsibility of picking up the pieces, bringing together family life and promoting social harmony in the aftermath of war. However, there are no special measures aimed at assisting them during and after armed conflict. The impact of warfare and death on children requires purposeful attention, as do — to no less a degree — the related negative effects on women. In particular, as we are reviewing United Nations peace operations, we need to have a better understanding of the impact of conflict on women and girls in order to ensure adequate provision for their safety and protection.

As regards children, Security Council resolution 1261 (1999), adopted on 25 August 1999, among other things,

> "Urges States and all relevant parts of the United Nations system to intensify their efforts to ensure an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of international law through political and other efforts, including promotion of the availability of alternatives for children to their participation in armed conflict". (*para. 13*)

Doing that will lessen the burden of mothers and of other women. May I express here a word of gratitude to the Jamaican presidency during the month of July for pushing that heart-wrenching issue a step further into the limelight.

Never before has the necessity for equal participation by women at the peace table been felt more keenly than it is today. During the special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, this issue was repeatedly emphasized, and urgent calls were made for world peace and for an end to armed conflict and human suffering. Those cries for peace and human security still resonate. We must listen to women and engage them in the search for lasting solutions. Women have the right to participate in aspects of peace processes, peace negotiations and the implementation of agreements as well as in post-conflict monitoring, peace enforcement and reconstruction.

Gender-based violence against women and girls is widely recorded, and calls out for an international awareness campaign to put a complete end to it. Namibia welcomes the suggestion that the United Nations maintain an open roster of qualified women for recruitment and deployment in key positions in the system. Women constitute half of the population, and possess half of the world's brain-power and experience.

For this to begin to happen, mindsets, especially those of men, must change and must give way to new thinking and to a new beginning for the United Nations in the field of conflict resolution and peacekeeping. Now is the time to move away from perceiving women only as victims of conflict and to see them also, and more importantly, as equal participants in securing peace and security in the world.

In conflict situations, violence against women, including rape, is used as a weapon of war in unconscionable violation of women's human rights and dignity. It is timely and imperative that the full force of international humanitarian and human rights law be applied effectively against all culprits.

Namibia supports the strengthening of the capacity of women to participate in all United Nations peace operations and to participate fully in decision-making at all levels. Women should continue to be involved in greater numbers in ongoing efforts to promote peace and to resolve conflicts, including through the appointment of qualified African women as special envoys and representatives of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). In that regard, Namibia welcomes the contribution made by the OAU's African Women's Committee on Peace and Development. Efforts should be made to enhance further cooperation with it. We are convinced that if and when a gender unit is established in the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, a fruitful link with the African Women's Committee will be established.

The mandates of peace missions, peacekeeping operations and peace-building activities need to have provisions on the protection of women. Also, women should take on high-level roles in field-based civilian peace and security operations at senior decision-making and management levels. A good beginning has been made, which we welcome, concerning a gender unit in the peacekeeping missions in Kosovo and in East Timor. We encourage the Secretary-General to establish similar units in other peacekeeping missions. To date, the Security Council has dispatched successful fact-finding missions to several conflict areas. In our view, a senior gender expert should be included in such missions, so that the Council can gain a full appreciation of the gender dimension of ongoing or potential conflicts.

Just last month, world leaders, at the Millennium Summit, commended the report (S/2000/809) of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations chaired by Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, and called for its early consideration and for the early implementation of its relevant recommendations. Like other countries represented here, Namibia laments the Brahimi report's lack of clear and categorical emphasis on gender perspectives and on an effective role for women in conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peace-building. That unfortunate situation and other shortcomings should be rectified during the implementation process.

In that context, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations organized a timely and successful seminar, held from 29 to 31 May 2000 at Windhoek, Namibia. Its theme was mainstreaming a gender perspective in multidimensional peace support operations. The Namibian Government and the people of Namibia were immensely honoured to have hosted that seminar and offered all possible support to ensure its success. The Namibia Plan of Action, inter alia, recommended that

> "Lessons learned from current and prior missions on gender should be incorporated at the planning stage of a new mission" (*S/2000/693, annex II, para. 4*)

and that

> "The current format of reporting, particularly with regard to situation reports and periodic reports of the Secretary-General, should include progress on gender mainstreaming throughout peacekeeping missions". (*para. 8*)

Namibia fully endorses the Plan of Action and urges all concerned to take its proposals into account when formulating policy objectives and implementation plans in respect of the Brahimi report.

In his previous capacity in another principal organ of the United Nations, my Minister for Foreign Affairs had numerous opportunities to address many topical social and humanitarian issues, particularly during the three key special sessions of the General Assembly, relating respectively to small island developing States, to Beijing+5 and to Copenhagen+5. Also, as a follow-up to the Secretary-General's 1998 report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (S/1998/318), we established a working group to monitor the implementation process. We have had the first report of that working group, so ably prepared by the Permanent Representatives of Singapore and of Spain, whom I heartily thank once again for their excellent work and their dedication.

It was pointed out that peace, security and social development are unceasingly and without exception being undermined in one way or another by the easy availability of small arms and light weapons. We are now all agreed about the devastating effects of these deadly weapons on civilian populations in Africa and in other developing countries.

I know that this pressing issue will be dealt with in a coordinated manner in the near future in Mali. Needless to say, this type of weaponry clearly contributes to prolonging armed conflict and imposes severe hardships, especially on women and children. By the same token, the process of disarmament, demobilization, resettlement and rehabilitation of ex-combatants should take into account the special needs of women and girls.

Landmine-awareness campaigns and demining activities cannot ignore the concerns and interests of the real victims, namely women and children. As I said elsewhere, women are not really begging for favours; they are actually demanding their legitimate rights and opportunities to contribute to peace, development and prosperity.

The views expressed today indicate that the maintenance of peace and security is a collective effort. It should therefore involve all women and men for our common good. To that end, let us put our words into deeds to make this, our one world, a peaceful and secure place for this and future generations.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list for this meeting. The next meeting of the Security Council to continue the consideration of the item on the agenda will be fixed in consultation with the members of the Security Council.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.